



LEGAL



ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

How AI is transforming the legal profession (2025)

January 16, 2025 · 10 minute read

A survey of professionals reveals the impact of legal work, clients, concerns, and future roles

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2024 Future of Professionals Report

Survey of 2,200 professionals and C-level corporate executives from over 50 countries

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Statistics from the Future of Professional Report

- 77% of respondents believe AI will have a **high or transformational impact** on their work by the next five years. That's an increase of 10 percentage points over the 2023 report's responses.
- 72% of legal professionals surveyed in the report view AI as a **force for good** in their profession.
- Half of law firm respondents cite **exploring and implementing AI** as their highest priority. In addition, they believe AI could help address other priorities, such as increased customer satisfaction and operational efficiency.

Over the past few years, legal professionals have become less wary of artificial intelligence (AI). Indeed, they are increasingly embracing AI as a transformative force, becoming more and more optimistic about **the positive impact** it can have on their practices.

According to the professionals surveyed in Thomson Reuters' 2024 **Future of Professionals Report**, AI is transforming the legal profession by automating routine tasks and boosting lawyer productivity through AI-powered tools that handle document review, legal research, and contract analysis, while showing that AI could save lawyers 4 hours per week while generating \$100,000 in new billable time per lawyer annually.

As they look ahead to 2025 and beyond, it's clear that legal professionals will need to stay on top of new developments in AI like, specifically, **generative AI** (GenAI) in areas like legal work, clients,

concerns, and future roles.

Impact on legal work

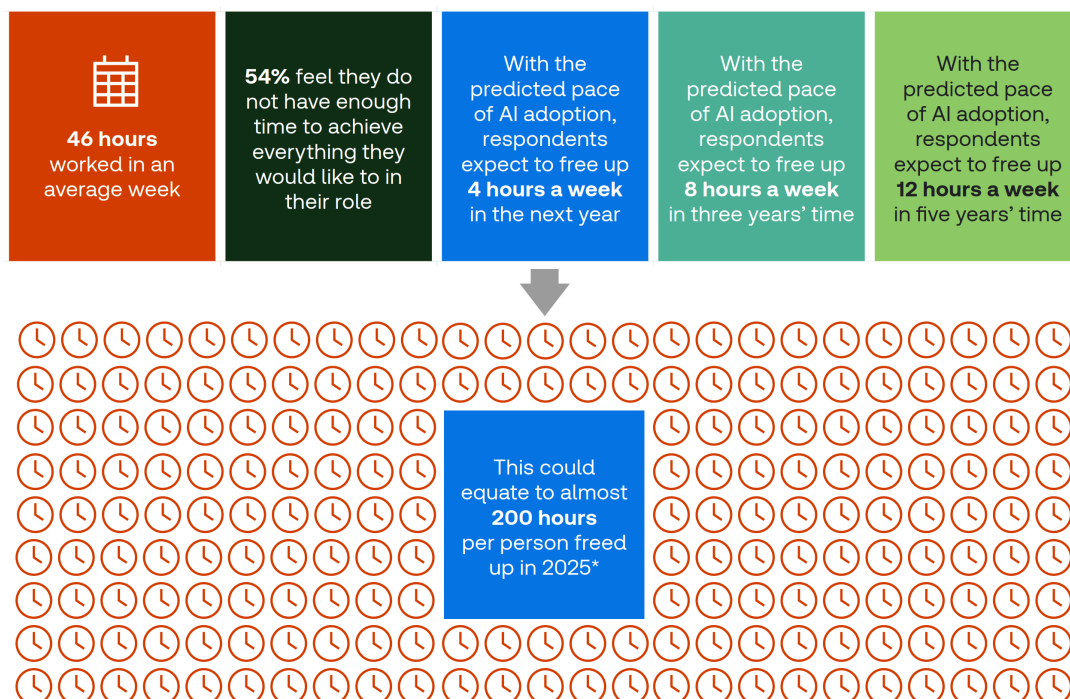
Legal professionals who wish to perform due diligence on the use of AI in their practices need to do so **thoughtfully and rigorously**. If they don't do so, they might not maximize the benefits this emerging technology can provide.

The benefits are significant, with the potential to transform the way legal professionals deliver value and service to clients. For one thing, AI is expected to significantly boost lawyer productivity through time savings, particularly through the automation of repetitive but necessary tasks that currently can take up a great deal of a professional's workflow—but don't need to. These tasks include **drafting standard documents** such as contracts. For instance, an AI tool can automate the complex process of searching, cutting, pasting, deleting, and editing to make **drafting and analysis of contracts** much faster and less tedious.

It's essential, of course, that such a tool be trustworthy. Legal professionals need to create documents that are **precise and enforceable**. This means that the AI they use must draw from sources developed and maintained by reputable legal experts—and be transparent about its data sources.

In addition, AI tools developed specifically for the legal profession can conduct **research on cases, precedents, and other legal topics**. AI can also summarize information across many sources and platforms much more rapidly than poring through these sources "manually." Instead, legal professionals can quickly get the information they need to put together strong cases, documents, and briefs.

All told, the *Future of Professionals Report* predicts that AI could **free up 4 hours of a legal professional's time per week**. For U.S. lawyers alone, the savings could translate into 266 million hours of increased productivity—approximately \$100,000 in new billable time per lawyer each year.



As AI tools continue to evolve, they are likely to have an increasing impact on how legal professionals use their time, particularly as workflows become more efficient. It's not surprising, then, that 43% of

legal professionals surveyed in the report predict that there will be a **decline in hourly rate billing models** over the next five years.

How could legal professionals make profitable use of that **additional time**? For many report respondents, the minutes and hours that AI can free up can provide these hard-working, hard-driving professionals a welcome opportunity to work on their physical and mental well-being. It will also allow them to spend more of their working hours on activities that can grow and strengthen their practices. These can include strategic planning for their firms, building their relationships with current or potential clients, and developing and delivering insights and guidance for those clients that can add value to their businesses.

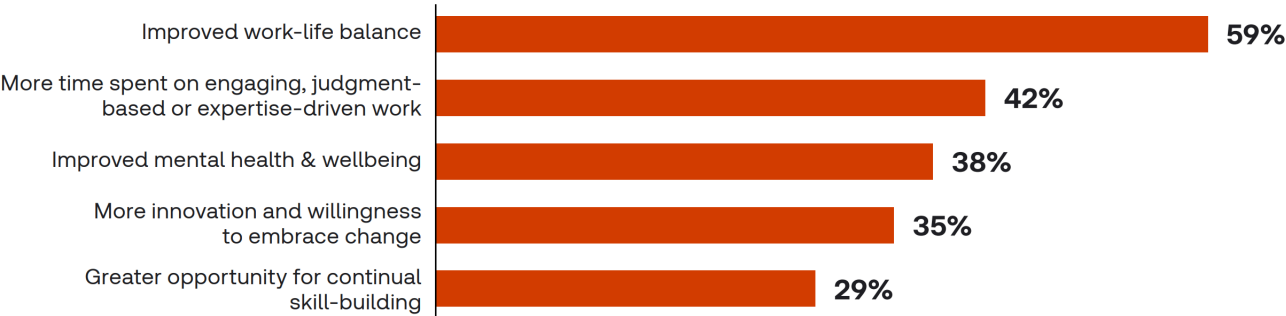
In other words, AI can allow professionals to spend time on **more innovative and intellectually satisfying practices**—the type of work that originally attracted them to the legal profession. Practices that can add value to the firm or the in-house legal department as well as the clients and company they serve are one of the greatest impacts that this GenAI is likely to have on the legal industry. In fact, it already is delivering on that promise.

Impact on clients

AI has been transforming how legal services **deliver value to their clients**, and it continues to do so. This, in turn, will require legal professionals to make changes to their traditional business models. **A recent report on the legal sector client relationships** from the Thomson Reuters Institute notes that technological advancements and shifting demographics are pushing law firms to adapt to evolving client demands.

Of the legal professionals surveyed in the *Future of Professionals Report*, 42% want to **spend more of their valuable time on expertise-driven legal work** in the next five years.

Which of the following changes would you most like to see in your profession in the future?



Respondents identified several key value areas where they are most excited about the use cases of AI-powered technologies:

- Handling large volumes of legal data more effectively (which 59% of respondents cited as an area where AI can help deliver greater value)
- Improving client response times (41%)
- Reducing human error (35%)
- Providing advanced analytics for decision-making (33%)

In other words, professionals are looking to AI as a means of providing more services to their clients that can boost those clients' success and that of the businesses.

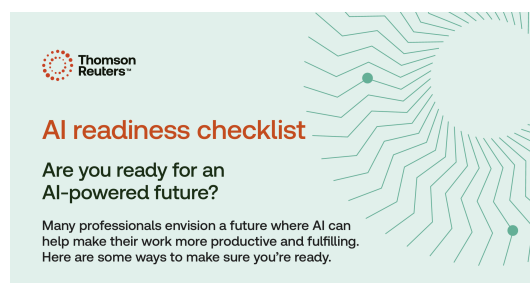
*The role of a good lawyer is as a 'trusted advisor,' not as a producer of documents . . . **breadth of experience** is where a lawyer's true value lies and that will remain valuable.*

Interview with attorney in the Future of Professionals Report

Clients, after all, are facing changes and challenges of their own. They're often under pressure to lower expenses and to get responses to their legal needs and queries as quickly as possible. AI can help legal professionals deliver services that address these challenges. AI-powered tools can analyze past client interactions, preferences, and behavioral patterns to generate highly personalized next-best actions for each client relationship. In this regard, legal professionals can use AI to:

- **Automate routine legal tasks**, thus freeing up time for higher-value client interactions.
- Provide predictive insights into potential case outcomes, which can enhance client counseling.
- Offer real-time language translation, which can facilitate global client communication.
- Generate customized reports and updates, thus improving transparency and engagement between lawyer and client.

All this noted, only 54% of respondents in the *Future of Professionals Report* feel confident articulating AI's value proposition to clients beyond greater efficiency. Legal professionals will need to demonstrate to clients that their services are still worth paying top dollar for, even with AI providing more and more of those services. And in fact, legal professionals still have worries about this technology, despite generally being more open to it.



Related infographic

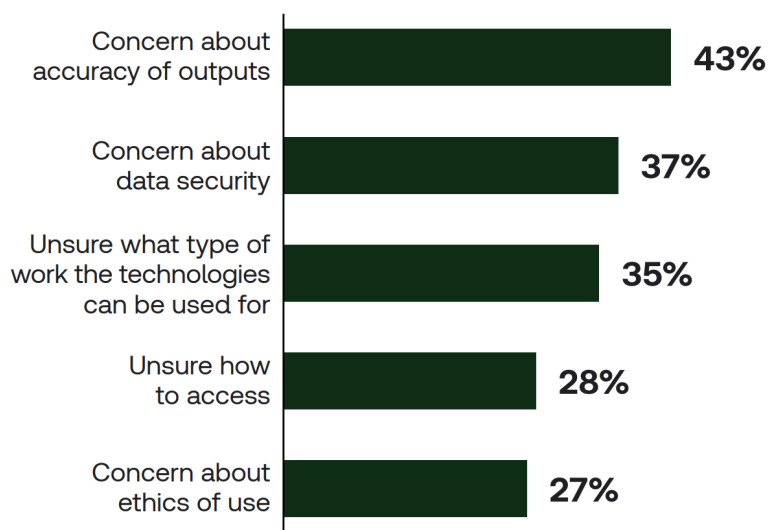
Are you ready for an AI-powered future? Here are some ways to make work more productive and fulfilling.

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Impact on concerns

As the report notes, one of the **biggest issues** regarding AI-powered technologies is **its ethical use**. Respondents believe that AI still requires significant human oversight as well as clearly drawn boundaries regarding its use. Among those professionals who've yet to work with an AI tool, 43% expressed **concerns about the quality and usefulness of the output**, and 37% have worries about how well AI technology can protect sensitive legal data.

If *no*, then what are the main reasons that you haven't tried using AI-powered technologies as a starting point?



Whether they're experienced with AI or not, nearly all respondents express the need for human oversight of its output as well as rules developed in-house to regulate its use and where it should be applied. Many also believe in establishing industry-wide codes of ethics and even certification.

In any case, legal professionals certainly believe in the need for boundaries. In the report, 96% of legal professionals believe allowing AI to represent clients in court would be "a step too far," while 83% consider using AI to provide legal advice would also constitute an inappropriate use case of the technology. There also appears to be a general consensus that lawyers should rigorously oversee the output of their AI tools to ensure **compliance with professional ethical standards**.

While GenAI technology will continue to advance, professionals' concerns about its use won't disappear. But those concerns should help push AI tools to become better and better.

Impact on future roles

Speaking of concerns: Professionals of all kinds have worried that this technology would eliminate thousands, even millions, of positions. But in many skilled professions (including the legal field), it now appears more likely that AI will **transform** rather than eliminate jobs.

This is certainly the perception of the majority of those surveyed in the *Future of Professionals Report*. All told, 85% of respondents believe that the **incorporation of AI** into their practices will require taking on new roles and learning new skills.

Respondents foresee increasing demand for the following capabilities:

- Ability to **adapt to change** (71% increase)
- Problem-solving (56% increase)
- Creativity (53% increase)
- Communication skills (52% increase)

Here are the top emerging roles that respondents identified:

- AI-specialist professionals (39%)
- IT and cybersecurity specialists (37% and 35%)
- AI implementation managers (33%)
- AI-specialist trainers (32%)

AI will create new challenges and **legal frameworks** for the legal profession, but also professionally satisfying opportunities. The future of legal practice has never looked brighter.

But the impact of AI is only the beginning. There are different ways in which law firms and attorneys will be using AI in the coming years—and the skills they'll need to acquire.

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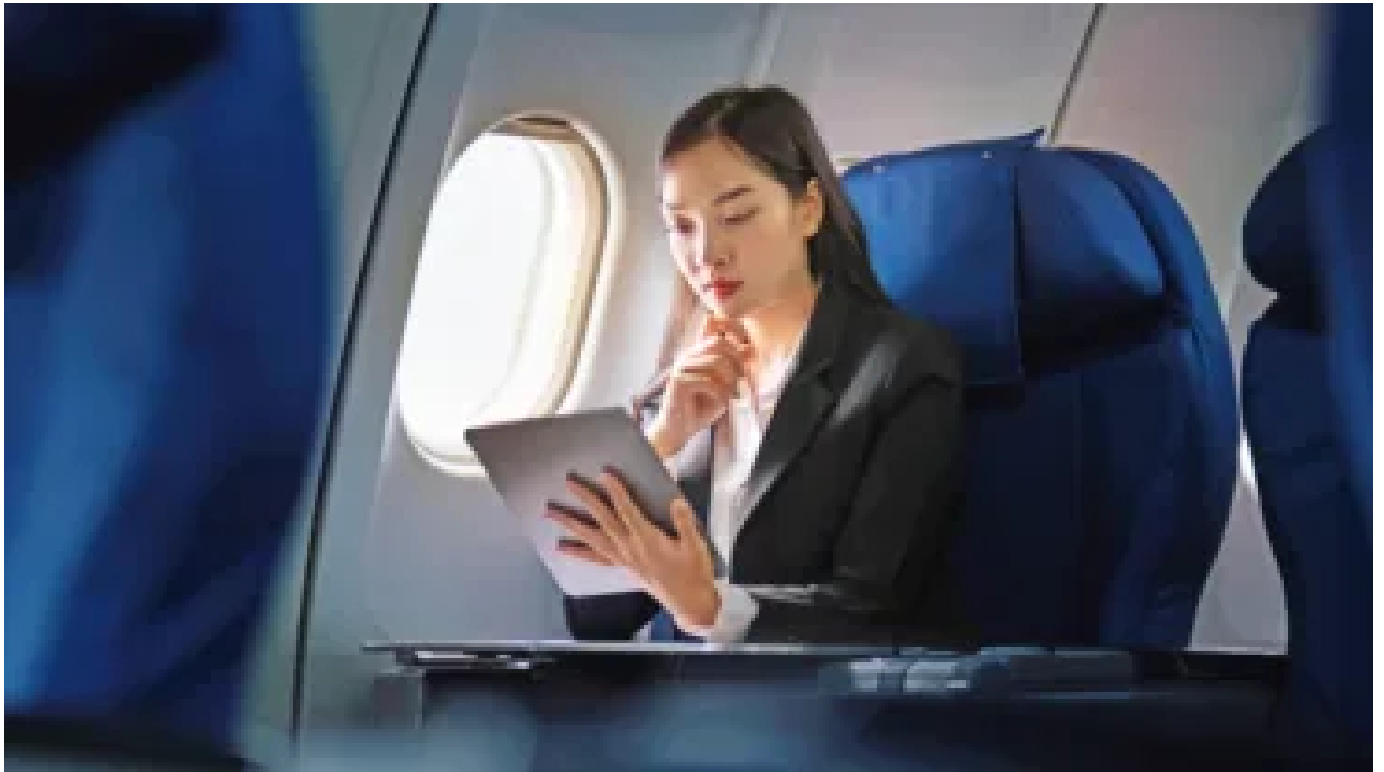
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